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APR 25 1932

U. S.

Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 28, 1932

FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY

Subject: "Better Homes."

No Publication Available

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Well, my friends, this is a WEEK. A Week with a capital "W."

But I suspect that most of you already know it.

Because, on the authority of Better Homes in America, I am told that in more than 8 thousand communities of the United States, Better Homes Week is being observed. The observance this year takes the form in many places of a community effort to serve two worthy purposes -- beautifying the home surroundings and furnishing employment to men and women. Homes which have been neglected are being reconditioned, old houses modernized, premises cleaned and grounds planted, thereby providing work and creating beauty.

Not because my approval or disapproval is going to cut any great figure in Better Homes Week, but because I want to help along with those two worthy purposes, I call your attention this morning to the fact that those of you who have the funds to take part in the observance will find no better time than today to act.

Better Homes in America asks me to call attention to the fact that you can obtain certain services from them if you are fortunate enough to be able to plan building a home this year. This organization says:

"If you intend to build a home, it will pay you to think out carefully what you want. The fate of a house is sealed in its plans and blueprints, and no amount of doctoring can make it completely satisfactory if it isn't planned carefully. Good architectural lines and good construction can be incorporated in the modest as well as in the pretentious home."

"Convenience and beauty are of greatest importance in the small home where the mother must be both housekeeper and homemaker. These houses often constitute the whole world of families who cannot travel and seek their recreation and beauty in distant places."

"Planning makes for saving, as well as for beauty and convenience. After careful study a special committee of the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, held last fall, reported that the small home can be built better, with more comfort and better appearance, at the same or even at a lower price than homeowners have paid for inferior housing. Planning makes the difference."

"But to know where to go for reliable information on housebuilding has puzzled homemakers in the past. The Extension Services of some State Agricultural Colleges are providing information of this type. Another source of information and direct help available to both urban and rural homemakers is the office of Better Homes in America, a national organization with headquarters in Washington, D. C. President Hoover sponsored this organization. Its president is Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, Secretary of the Interior, and its director is Dr. James Ford. Its purpose is to make it possible for all families to get information that will help them enjoy at least minimum standards of safety, comfort, convenience and beauty in their homes."

So if you face problems of home building or remodeling, you may look to Better Homes in America for information on places where you can obtain planning service at minimum cost. However, not so many of us, I'm thinking, will be able to observe Better Homes Week this year by starting a program of building or remodeling. But we all can do our utmost with the present home to bring up its convenience and comfort to a higher standard.

I have just chanced upon some remarks by Miss Bess Viemont of the U. S. Bureau of Home Economics on arrangement of furniture and rugs which may be of some help to you in working out the spring rearrangement of your living room. Miss Viemont tells us that:

"To make a room look its best, the arrangement of furniture must be balanced. Let's start with the large pieces in balancing our ideal living room. Place the largest pieces parallel or at right angles to the wall, and distribute them so that all sides of the room seem of about the same importance. For instance, a fireplace calls for a piano, a davenport, or a bookcase against the opposite wall. A secretary-writing desk may counterbalance a large picture hung above a table; or a couch with a colorful hanging behind it may face a group of attractively curtained windows. If you place all the large pieces on one side of the room the whole room gives an impression of instability.

"Balance in furniture grouping also makes for comfort and convenience. If all the chairs and lamps are out of place after the family has spent an evening in the living room it is a strong indication that they were not comfortably and conveniently arranged in the beginning. It goes almost without saying that no piece of furniture should be placed alone. A desk without a chair is useless; a table in the middle of the floor becomes merely a traffic obstruction; and no matter how comfortable a chair in a dark corner may be, it is never used unless pulled near a light.

"Also place your furniture groups so that all parts of the room are accessible. For instance, don't put a large table loaded down with lamps, magazines, and family portraits in front of a window. If you do, you can't open the window.

"Forethought in planning furniture groupings will make it possible for all members of the family to occupy the living room at the same time without trespassing on each other's rights. There can be favorite chairs for father and mother and places for the children. In every room one group of furnishings naturally becomes the chief center of interest. It may surround windows or a fireplace which are interesting spots in themselves, and become still more enjoyable when comfortable chairs and a table with a lamp or books are close at

hand. If the room has neither of these features, a large wall space may be made the most important part of the room's decoration. A davenport with one or two small tables for books or magazines, good reading lamps, a large picture or 'hanging' and a comfortable chair or two may be arranged into an attractive unit.

"To balance the principal center of interest, there should be subordinate groupings that will emphasize its dominance but not compete with it for recognition. One corner of the room may be devoted to reading, with adequate lamps, comfortable chairs, and a table for magazines and books. The bookcase may supply the foundation of this group. It may be a set of built-in shelves, a separate piece of furniture that can be moved from one place to another, or bookshelves combined with a desk. By the way, never place books above a radiator, for the heat will ruin them.

"Many times small rugs are placed in small furniture groups, but this looks well only when the floor is otherwise uncovered, or when the principal floor covering is plain. Placing a small rug upon a large one of pronounced design is comparable to hanging one picture over another. In large rooms, two or more small rugs, alike or very similar in color and design may be substituted for a large carpet or rug.

"A still better plan, perhaps, is to place a large rug in the center of the room and build up the ends with smaller harmonizing rugs; or, sometimes, the larger rug can be moved a little toward one end of the room, and a smaller one used at the other end. The principle of arranging small rugs is to lay them parallel to the main floor covering, to the principal piece of furniture in a group, or to the wall. If laid at different angles and without reference to the dominant lines, they cut up the floor space and make a room seem crowded.

"Remember that small rugs are treacherous; they kick up and slip easily, and are a source of some danger. When used on highly polished floors, they should be laid over safety pads that will hold them securely in place."

And there you have the comments from Miss Bess M. Viemont of the U. S. Bureau of Home Economics on the principles of arranging the living room furniture and rugs for best appearance, greatest comfort, and most convenience.

And let me say again that if any of you are so fortunate as to be able this spring to build or to remodel your homes, you may profit by sending to the offices of Better Homes in America, Washington, D. C., for a description of the small cost services available on planning.
